

NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY



NEWS

LETTER

A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports,
their History and Social Significance

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Judith Ozment, Librarian
Esther Taylor, Editor

No. 11

THE NARRAGANSETT PACER

By Alexander Mackay-Smith

In his two volume "Horse of America" published in 1857, the first important book on the subject, Frank Forester devoted a full chapter to the Narragansett Pacer, even though the breed was at that time virtually extinct. Although a number of authors have since contributed to the subject - Wallace, Battell, Phillips, Miller, Chard, Woodward and Fairfax Harrison - no full length study of our first breed of horses has appeared in print. This is the more remarkable in that the dams of three of Justin Morgan's four best sons (Sherman Morgan, Woodbury Morgan and Revenge) were Narragansetts. So also was the dam of Gaines' Denmark (1851), the greatest of all American Saddle Horse progenitors. John H. Wallace, founder of the Standardbred Register, was convinced that the speed of the trotter is derived from his Narragansett pacing ancestry. Furthermore, during the first 150 years of the colonial period, in most of the races at a quarter of a mile, the Quarter Horses were runners, which also paced but did not trot.

Columbus took sugar cane plantings to Santo Domingo in 1493 and sugar masters from the Canary Islands followed, building trapiches, horse powered mills for extracting the juice. Sugar was introduced to Barbados in 1642 and spread rapidly to the other British islands of the West Indies. After 1698, when France lifted the ban on the exportation of sugar to other nations, Martinique and Guadalupe went over to sugar culture. So also did Surinam in South Africa, ceded by Britain to Holland in 1667. Because the land in these areas was far too valuable to be used for other purposes, the sugar planters imported almost everything else, including the horses vital for powering the sugar mills, there being no water power available.

New England had the merchants and the ships and it developed the produce to sell to the West Indies, provisions and supplies in the hold, horses on deck. Before the Revolution, consequently, the great horse breeding section of the colonies was not Virginia or Maryland or South Carolina, but New England. In 1648 the "Welcome" of Boston carried 80 horses to Barbados and in 1656 William Coddington was sending horses from Newport (R.I.) to the same destination. Until 1776 New England shipped thousands of horses annually to the sugar plantations - at Surinam, for example, a vessel was not even permitted to trade unless horses constituted part of the cargo.

The cream of the export trade was in selling saddle horses to the sugar planters and their families. In these hot countries the gait was favored, since its rocking motion hardly moves the rider in the saddle. All the American colonies were well supplied with pacers. From mediaeval times most saddle horses were "amblers" (pacers) - it was Charles II who in the 1660's began the fashion for running races; the first Thoroughbred did not cross the Atlantic until 1730 (Bully Rock to Virginia); while

before 1760 no Thoroughbred stallions were imported to New England, only one each to New York and Pennsylvania, three to Maryland, four to South Carolina and fourteen to Virginia.

Rhode Island had more ships than any of the New England colonies and was also the major distiller of rum made from the molasses of the return cargoes. It was also Rhode Island which developed the special breed of pacers most in demand as saddle horses for the southern planters, not only in the West Indies, but also in the Carolinas, Virginia and Maryland. The breed originated in what was regarded as the most fertile section of New England, the Narragansett country, a strip of land about 20 miles long and 4 wide on the West side of Narragansett Bay, from Wickford on the north to Point Judith on the south, close to

NARRAGANSETT PACER ADVERTISEMENT

Providence Gazette, Jan. 7, 1764

SHIPPING HORSES wanted.



NICHOLAS BROWN,
and COMPANY,
Want to buy immedi-
ately, a few likely SURINAM HORSES.

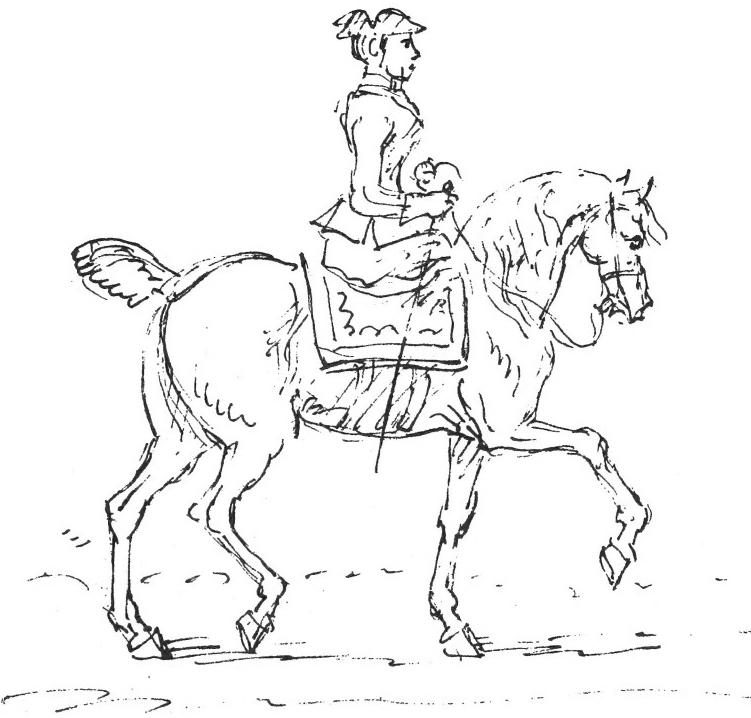
Courtesy of A. Mackay-Smith

the Gulf Stream, with a temperate climate, admirably adapted to pasture, hay and grain, and indented with rivers and bays which simplified fencing. Here families such as the Updikes, Hazards, Robinsons and Gardiners established plantations of several thousand acres each, stocked with cattle, sheep, pigs and horses; here they built great houses filled with portraits by Smibert and Copley and with the masterpieces of the Newport silversmiths and cabinet makers, such as Vernon, Clarke, Goddard, and Townsend, both herds and houses being tended by slaves from the West Indies - all in all a civilization much more characteristic of Virginia and South Carolina than of New England.

Being accomplished breeders of livestock it was natural that the Narragansett planters would have developed a breed of pacers. John Hull, Treasurer of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Master of the Mint, eminent silversmith and leader of the Pettaquamscut Purchasers who in 1657 bought a major part of the area from three Narragansett Indian Sachems, on April 16, 1677 wrote to the Secretary of the Purchasers, Benedict Arnold, suggesting that "we, the partners of pointe Juda Necke, did fence with a good stone wall at the north End thereof and procure a very good breed of large and fair mares and stallions, and that noe mungrell breed might come amonege them, wee might have a very choice breed and in a few years might draw of(f) considerable numbers and shipp them for Barbados." Progress toward the realization of this far sighted project continued steadily for the following half century.

Every breed has its foundation sire - Justin Morgan, Rysdyk's Hambletonian, Sir Archy and so forth. For the Narragansett Pacer it was a stallion called Snip. Not long after his father's death in 1716 the future Royal Governor of Rhode Island, William Robinson (1693-1751), acquired the land on Point Judith mentioned by Hull. Daniel Updike (born 1761) of the nearby Cocumscossock Plantation wrote: - "Old Snip was found an old Gov. Robinson's farm in Point Judith. Horses were then (when Robinson bought) running wild (i.e. on free range) in Point Judith, and he was found among them. Where he came from no one knew. He was the sire of the Narragansett." Most of the subsequent newspaper advertisements of Narragansett stallions read "Narragansett Snip" or "a clean bred Narragansett horse of the true Snip breed."

Narragansetts were mostly light chestnut (sorrel) in color, about fifteen hands, very smooth gaited, fast, and with great endurance, carrying their riders comfortable for forty, fifty, or even sixty miles a day. Their excellence was much improved by race track selection. Rev. James McSparren, Rector of the Church of England in Narragansett, wrote in 1753: - "They are remarkable for fleetness and swift pacing; and I have seen some of them pace a mile in a little more than two minutes," a speed which harness trotters and pacers did not again achieve for well



WOMAN WEARING A TRICORNE HAT (Riding a Pacer) by James Seymour (1702-1752). From the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

over a hundred years. Wilkins Updike (born 1784) wrote: - "Little Neck Beach (now the bathing beach at Narragansett Pier) was the race course. A silver tankard was the prize and high bets were otherwise made on speed." Inland race courses were at Little Rest Hill and Tower Hill. Narragansett stallions were sold at high prices to other colonies, notably South Carolina. In the 1759 inventory of Jeffrey Hazard "his riding beast" was valued at 300 pounds and a "Sorrel stone horse" at 400 pounds.

There were many reasons for the extinction of the breed - higher taxes on

molasses, the export of so much of the best breeding stock, the depredations of British troops during the Revolution, the division of the big plantations. Most important, however, was highway improvement and the consequent shift in fashion from riding to driving, from pacers to trotters. Only a few survived after 1800.

During the colonial era the Narragansett Pacer made Rhode Island famous throughout the Western World. In no other endeavor has she since achieved such eminence.

First published in The Chronicle of the Horse. March 17, 1972.

RICH RESOURCES OF THE NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY ATTRACT VARIETY OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

PAINTER OF AMERICAN RACE HORSES

One of the principal research projects recently carried out by the National Sporting Library has been in support of a monograph by Alexander Mackay-Smith on Edward Troye, the Swiss-born, British trained artist, who from 1832 to 1872 painted portraits of most of the famous racehorses in America both Thoroughbreds and Trotters. This book, copiously illustrated in color, is to be published in the summer of 1981 by the National Museum of Racing, Saratoga, New York, which will hold a major exhibition of Troye's work during the month of August. Virtually every Thoroughbred on American race tracks today has in its pedigree a dozen or more ancestors, stallions and mares, painted by Troye. The book will be sold by subscription, the names of the subscribers

to be printed at the beginning, the copies will be numbered and autographed by the author.

MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Other interesting research is being done by the following people:

Jean Froissard, Ecuyer-Professeur, F.F.S.E. and his wife Lilly Powell-Froissard are drawing on the resources of the Library in gathering material for their new book on the history of equitation. Mr. Froissard, who is a talented photographer, has also been photographing illustrations of historic interest to be used in this book.

The Design Director of "Equus", Jean Lamuniere, photographed illustrations which were used for the article, in the November 1980 issue, entitled *Fear: The Will to Survive - The Instincts of the Wild*

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J. FENIMORE COOPER'S LAST OF THE MOHICANS A NARRATIVE OF 1757 TELLS OF NARRAGANSETTS

In the state of Rhode Island there is a bay called Narraganset, so named after a powerful tribe of Indians, who formerly dwelt on its banks. Accident, or one of those unaccountable freaks which nature sometimes plays in the animal world, gave rise to a breed of horses which were once well known in America by the name of Narragansets. They were small, commonly of the color called sorrel in America, and distinguished by their habit of pacing. Horses of this race were, and are still, in much request as saddle horses on account of their hardiness and the ease of their movements. As they were also sure of foot, the Narragansets were greatly sought for by females who were obliged to travel over the roots and holes in the "new countries."

RECENT DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY

Since the publication of our last newsletter, the Library has received a number of interesting gifts of books and publications.

Mr. John Alexander gave a set of Shorthorn Herd Books.

Mrs. William Gates sent A Biographical Directory of Leading Drivers by Dave Garland and nine volumes of The United States Trotting Association Yearbook.

Mr. William Tupper contributed a large number of books; outstanding among them are a lovely volume of Munroe's *The Grand National* and two volumes edited by Eugene Connett, one entitled *Duck Shooting Along the Atlantic Tidewater* and the other *American Sporting Dogs*.

Mr. Paul Mellon presented the Library with the outstanding new two volume work from the Mellon Collection: *British Sporting and Animal Drawings 1500-1850* and *British Sporting and Animal Paintings 1655-1867*.

Mr. Jim Delmege of County Cork, Ireland, sent a unique gift: a copy of Hobson's *Fox Hunting Atlas*, and a book of Alken prints with handwritten notes and a hunting diary dated 1840.

Mr. Don Follmer, co-author of *The Endless Chukker*, gave a signed copy of his book.

Mrs. Thomas M. Waller added Mayhew's *The Illustrated Horse Doctor* and Mrs. Power O'Donoghue's *Ladies on Horseback* to the Library's collection.

Miss Nancy Comer donated a copy of *The Agricultural Remount Service's Catalogue of Horses to be Sold at Public Auction, November 22, 1948*. This sale was held at Fort Reno, Okla., and was one of several sales held in various parts of the



A SMOOTH "GAITED" ANIMAL was preferred for travel. From *Hoof Prints Over America* by W. Smithson Broadhead, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, donated by John H. Fritz.

United States to disperse horses captured during World War II.

Mrs. Judith Ozment gave a 1904 Fleming's *Vest Pocket Veterinary Adviser*.

Mr. Stephen Cromer sent a 1920 copy of *The Thoroughbred Record*. This copy of *The Thoroughbred Record*, printed forty-five years after the founding of the paper in 1875, gives reason to pause and admire the continuing success of this, the oldest publication of its kind in the United States.

Mr. Alexander Mackay-Smith and *The Chronicle of the Horse* have presented the Library with several recently published volumes.

We are pleased to report that during the past year one hundred and sixth books and articles have been added to the Library's collection.

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Live On by Katherine Albro Houpt, VMD, PhD. The pictures used and the volumes in which they appear are as follows:

"Lion Attacking a Horse" by George Stubbs. From *Mr. Stubbs the Horse Painter* by Constance-Anne Parker, London, 1971, donated by Harry T. Peters, Jr.

"Stampeding Horses Through an Indian Camp" by Harold Von Schmidt. From *Harold Von Schmidt Draws and Paints the Old West* by Walter Reed, Northland Press, 1972, donated by A. Mackay-Smith.

"Dangerous Encounter" by Johy Clymer. From *John Clymer, An Artist's Rendezvous with the Frontier West* by Walter Reed, Northland Press, 1976, donated by A. Mackay-Smith.

Mr. Lamuniere also photographed some material to be used to illustrate a future article. The book used as a source was *l'Histoire Pittoresque de l'Equitation* by Charles Aubry, France, 1833, donated by the late Charlotte Noland.

Laura Camins, a Curator at the Metro-

politan Museum of Art, is doing extensive work on the *Horse in Art* in preparation for an exhibition devoted to European art of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries which is to be held at the Springfield "Museum of Art" next summer.

Ms. Camins was particularly interested in the following books:

Hof-Kriegs und Reit Schul by George Englehard von Lohneisen, illustrated by Valentin Trichter, printed by Paul Lochner, Nurnberg, 1729, donated by the late Charlotte Noland.

Ecole de Cavalerie by M. De la Gueriniere, Ecuier du Roy, printed by Jacques Collombat, Paris, 1733, from the Arundel-Lonsdale Collection, donated by Russell Arundel.

L'Instruction Du Roy en l'exercice De Monter a Cheval by Antoine De Pluvinel. A facsimile of the 1670 edition, printed by Olms Press, Germany, 1972, donated by A. Mackay-Smith.

From these and other volumes in the Library, Ms. Camins obtained documentation, reference material and illustrations. She wished to be able to identify the individual movements of dressage and to become acquainted with the figures which make up dressage rides, pas de deux and quadrilles. While perusing an ancient volume she was delighted to find the scores of the music used to accompany specific dressage movements. For example in *Hof-Kriegs und Reit Schul*, there

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LIBRARY STAFF CHANGES

Mrs. Belle Cohen, newsletter editor and assistant librarian, resigned in July to take another position. Miss Esther Taylor, who is indexing the "American Farmer", will edit the newsletter and assist in the Library for the present.

LIBRARY WELCOMES NEW FRIENDS

The Library has welcomed eleven new members: Mr. John Alexander, Mrs. Bella Buttkay, Miss Nancy Comer, Mr. Steven Cromer, Mr. Jim Delmege, Mrs. Wm. Gates, Mrs. Joan Hill, Mr. Richard Hooper, Mr. D. Harcourt Lees, Jr., Mr. Gene Lewis and Mrs. Judith Ozment.

We wish to remind all members and prospective members that gifts, both books and cash, are tax deductible. We urge you to encourage your friends to join in maintaining and preserving the literature and art of horse and field sports. If you would like additional copies of the newsletter to give to friends, please let us know and we will be glad to send extra copies to you.

VISITORS TO THE LIBRARY FROM FAR AND NEAR

In August and September the Library welcomed two tour groups from the Smithsonian Institution Resident Associate Program. Approximately forty people visited the Library each time. They expressed great interest in the history and the purpose of the Library and were enthusiastic about the books and works of art selected for display.

The Smithsonian tour groups included people from the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and metropolitan Washington, but especially noteworthy were the visitors from Mexico, South America, England, France and Egypt.

Other guests during recent months have come from Canada, England, Ireland and Australia as well as many scattered points in this country. Very recently David Saunders, Head Coachman to H.R.H. Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburg, paid a visit to the Library.

Thus far in 1980 over one hundred sixty people have visited the Library.

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is a musical notation to be used in teaching a horse the capriol.

The Library will be lending several books to this exhibit.

The fanfares and the history of Stag Hunting attracted the composer David Sur of Cambridge, Mass., to the Library. Winner of an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. Sur has been commissioned to write a composition based on "The Unicorn Tapestries". This composition is being written for a chamber ensemble with narrator and vocalist. The Library has furnished him with material on the history of Stag Hunting and the musical notations of the fanfares.

Besides the Unicorn composition, he has found material for another composition which will use hunting horn calls from the fourteenth century.

The following books were the source of this material:

The Sportsman's Dictionary - "Ancient Hunting notes..." by Henry James Pye,

The common Planters leading easy Lives don't much admire Labour, or any manly Exercise, except Horse-Racing, nor Diversion, except Cock-Fighting, in which some greatly delight. This easy Way of Living, and the Heat of the Summer makes some very lazy, who are then said to be Climate-struck.

The Saddle-Horses, though not very large, are hardy, strong, and fleet; and will pace naturally and pleasantly at a prodigious Rate.

They are such Lovers of Riding, that almost every ordinary Person keeps a Horse; and I have known some spend the Morning in ranging several Miles in the Woods to find and catch their Horses only to ride two or three Miles to Church, to the Court-House, or to a Horse-Race, where they generally appoint to meet upon Business; and are more certain of finding those that they want to speak or deal with, than at their Home.

From The Present State of Virginia by Hugh Jones, London, 1724, as reproduced in The Pageant of American Sport by John Allen Krout, Yale University Press, 1929, donated by the Thomas Holden White family. The pacers seen by the Reverend Hugh Jones, Rector of Bruton Church, may have been descendants of the Irish Hobbys imported to Virginia in 1666.

London, 1744, donated by A. Mackay-Smith.

Venerie Normande, Ou L'Ecole de la Chasse aux Chiens Courants by M. Le Verrier De la Conterie, Rouen, 1778, Arundel-Lonsdale Collection, donated by Russell Arundel.

Un Siecle De Venerie by le Comte du Passage, France, 1912, donated by Joseph B. Thomas, Jr.

La Venerie by le Duc de Brissac, Paris, 1966, donated by The Chronicle of the Horse.

Mrs. George P. Greenhalgh, Jr., Master of Blue Ridge Hunt, is working on material that will enable her to up-date the Photograph Album of the Bryn Mawr Hound Show. The Bryn Mawr Hound Show was first held in 1920. The Album contains pictures taken at the shows from 1949 to and including 1962. This project is being carried out for the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America. Mrs. Greenhalgh is also interested in starting a similar Album for the Virginia Hound Show.

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Mr. _____

Mrs. _____

Address _____

Donations of books as well as cash are acceptable for membership.

All gifts, both books and cash, are tax deductible.

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